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Dear Secretary Johanns:

Thank you for allowing the Kansas Rural Center an opportunity to provide testimony for the upcoming Farm Bill. We have been active on the issues concerning sustainable agriculture, and supportive of family farms and rural communities for 25 years. We have 12 staff and our office is located in Whiting, Ks.

I want to emphasize a couple of issues today. One concerns the Farm Bill, and the structure of cuts that will be implemented to comply with decreased appropriations. Here are two statements recently drafted by our Board of Directors:

Kansas Rural Center Farm Bill Position Statements

"As a long term goal, the board supports a transition of farm support payments from commodities to conservation and enhanced rural development. We understand that this should be undertaken gradually, with increasingly less reliance on commodity payments."

"The board supports lowering commodity payment limitations and closing loop holes."

These statements are in line with a recent Kellogg poll of voters in Iowa, Kansas and Minnesota which found overwhelming support for capping federal payments to single farms at no more than \$250,000. This figure, of course, is the same as payment cap legislation proposed by Senators Grassley, Dorgan and Hagel. We hope that the new farm bill would follow this path of discipline in commodity payments, and a gradual shift of rural support away from production. Our research shows that only 9 Kansas farming entities would be affected by the cap. We also feel strongly that food and nutrition programs should be protected and strengthened. Ultimately, our society will be judged by how well we treat those most in need.

A second issue that has become of increasing interest to Kansans is rural development, and more specifically, wind energy. What will be the structure of development of this "new found" resource? Will there be thousands or hundreds of thousands of Kansans who

own a piece of this action, similar to our early agricultural development? Or will we skip widespread rural prosperity and go right to a structure similar to our present agricultural economy, where our resources are harvested as cheaply as possible, exported elsewhere, with the profits also headed elsewhere as return to far flung investors? There is room for both kinds of development in this state, but the role of government is to insure wide spread prosperity of our citizens.

It is vital to rural Kansas that local and regional farmer cooperatives, municipalities, schools, counties, and investment clubs be supported and encouraged. We hope that the next farm bill targets and fully supports USDA rural development programs.

There is our position. Farm Bill support should take the form of a gradual shift to payments based on conservation practices and not commodities. USDA programs should increasingly focus on rural development, especially those which bring about widespread prosperity, not concentration. Cuts in programs, if necessary, should be targeted towards those entities least in need.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Dan
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Executive Director

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